

Coordinating the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) with Great Start to Quality (GSQ)

What is the big picture?

The Office of Great Start has a clear focus of data-driven early learning and care programs for continuous quality improvement. Learn more by reading [Great Start, Great Investment, Great Future: The Plan for Early Learning and Development in Michigan](#). [GSQ](#) helps parents find early learning settings for their children and helps providers and educators improve the care they give to children. As Michigan's state prekindergarten program, [GSRP](#) has always had a continuous improvement model and is a big part of the big picture!

Is participation in GSQ voluntary for my GSRP program?

No; legislation requires that each GSRP subrecipient minimally must demonstrate three quality stars in the GSQ system. Though we typically think of a GSRP program in terms of a GSRP subrecipient which may in turn have multiple preschool sites, it is important to note that GSQ recognizes each individual license as its own program because that is how the ratings are computed and published.

Participation is voluntary for other licensed programs such as group child care homes, family child care homes, center-based child care and non-GSRP preschool programs. Participation in GSQ is voluntary for unlicensed providers such as relatives who receive payments from the state for taking care of a child. Additionally, there is no cost for parents to access the system.

What are the positions that I need to be aware of?

There are five main positions:

- [GSQ Assessment Specialist](#). The GSQ Assessment Specialist validates a random selection of all Self-Assessment Surveys (SAS) as well as all programs that self-assess with a 4 or 5 star SAS rating. The GSQ Assessment Specialist also performs classroom observation to complete Form A of the Preschool Program Quality Assessment (PQA).
- [GSQ Quality Improvement Consultant \(QIC\)](#). With eligible programs that serve children with high needs, the QIC provides support for continuous improvement plans, acting as coach and mentor to personnel as designated by program administrators. The GSRP structure emphasizes continuous improvement and provides support for that work so GSRP subrecipients do not require services of the QIC. However, this document concludes with collaborative opportunities between GSRP and GSQ.
- [Approved Rater](#). An Approved Rater, with status as a PQA Reliable Assessor, has a singular focus to complete and document PQA Form A. The Approved Rater uses the unique STARS platform classroom ID to record a completed PQA Form A. GSQ provides no financial supports for Approved Raters. GSQ Approved Raters can include the GSRP Early Childhood Specialist (ECS). To learn more about GSQ Approved Raters, click [here](#).
- [GSRP ECS](#). The GSRP ECS implements a systematic process to observe and evaluate our state prekindergarten program. The ECS supports classroom staff to meet the goals set for the program and the children. The ECS leads a data analysis team and ensures that reports are shared with GSRP Parent Advisory Committee. For more information about the GSRP ECS, click [here](#).
- [Resource Center \(RC\) Quality Improvement Specialist \(QIS\)](#). The QIS is the regional go-to person for all things GSQ. For locations and contact information, click [here](#).

What are the main parts of the GSQ system that I need to know about?

An online platform holds all data. It is called the *STARS platform* (STARS is not an acronym). To access the user manual click [here](#). To access other resources, click [here](#).

The Program Profile includes basic information about the type of program entering the system: registered family child care home, licensed group child care home or licensed child care center. GSRPs may want to include the ECS as the secondary contact. Information entered will generate an appropriate version of the SAS to be completed.

The SAS is loosely based on PQA Form B and is aligned with Michigan's Early Childhood Standards of Quality. The SAS assesses Qualifications and Professional Development, Family and Community Partnerships, Administration and Management, Environment, Curriculum and Instruction. The SAS for the entire site cannot be submitted until it is inclusive of all classrooms under one Department of Human Services (DHS) child care license. All licensees that would like to have a published rating on www.greatstartCONNECT.org must complete and submit an SAS that includes all early childhood classrooms at the site that are under the same license. For example, ABC Site may have one tuition-based classroom and one GSRP classroom under the same license. In order to submit a SAS for that licensee to receive a published rating, both classrooms must be listed in the Program Profile in the STARS platform and all staff and evidence documents must be uploaded into the Document Manager. Once these steps are complete the site may submit the SAS for document review and/or an on-site validation if selected. Once this process is complete, the quality rating will be published. The SAS can be edited and submitted at any time, but once submitted it is locked and remains locked for two years.

An onsite validation visit is completed by a GSQ Assessment Specialist and takes place either as a random validation of the SAS or as verification of self-assessed 4 or 5 star rating and includes observation to complete PQA Form A. Review of SAS evidence may occur after program hours and takes approximately an hour. Programs receive a 30 day window of time for an unannounced visit for completion of PQA Form A during classroom hours. Currently, the GSQ Assessment Specialist completes PQA Form A using a paper booklet. Scores are recorded in the STARS platform and used to calculate the final star rating. Plans are underway to transition to use of the [OnlinePQA](#) system and discontinue use of the paper-booklet Form A. To learn more about the onsite validation visit, click [here](#).

An Alternate Path to star ratings is available. GSRP, Head Start and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredited programs in good standing with their funders and in operation for at least one year are eligible. Newly licensed sites and those programs currently in re-competition are not eligible for the Alternate Path. GSQ allows an eligible program to post with a 4 star rating without having a validation visit and a PQA Form A completed, as long as enough points are achieved on the SAS to earn a 4 star rating.

To be posted as a 5 star program, Alternate Path programs with a 5 star SAS must request a validation and then a PQA FORM A score. An Alternate Path program becomes a 5 star program with a completed validation and a PQA Form A score high enough to qualify at the 5 star level (4.5 or higher). A program eligible for the Alternate Path can choose to use a GSQ Approved Rater or a GSQ Assessment Specialist; an additional PQA Form A is completed when GSRP chooses to work with a GSQ Assessment Specialist to document program quality. For more information about the alternate path, click [here](#).

How are the GSRP and the GSQ quality requirements connected?

The PQA is the classroom-level, program evaluation tool for GSRP and GSQ, but there are differences to be aware of.

- GSRP requires use of the full PQA each year; Form A is completed for each unique teaching team and Form B is completed for each subrecipient.
- Posted GSQ star ratings are based on SAS data and PQA Form A scores; they remain valid in the system for two years.

GSRP and GSQ have staff that implement PQA Form A and support data-driven improvement efforts.

- The ECS is the educational leader for GSRP teaching teams. The GSRP ECS systematically uses the full PQA throughout each academic year. PQA data and child outcome data are used together for continuous improvement efforts.
- The GSQ Improvement Consultant works predominately with programs other than GSRP, providing guidance and making comments on local quality improvement plans.

What are the differences between GSQ participation at sites with single preschool classrooms and sites that have multiple preschool classrooms?

GSRP participates in the GSQ system based on the current DHS child care license. The Program Profile is completed for one DHS regular license and includes all early childhood classrooms under the license. The SAS can reflect individual classroom-level or site-wide program information. All GSRP classrooms must be part of a completed and submitted SAS in order for the quality star rating to post at the online platform.

The ISD can see posted program ratings on the web based platform; but not ratings for GSRP classrooms where the SAS is not submitted. For those, contact the local RC director to verify program ratings. Alternately, the GSRP classroom may show evidence of a 3 star or higher rating by providing a copy of the individual SAS printed from the STARS platform. Steps for GSRP to select a Multi-Classroom Self-Assessment Survey:

- Select "YES" in the program profile to fill out more than one SAS for a site. If this selection has already been made the GSRP will need to request a change in the Stars Profile by contacting the local Resource Center at 877-614-7328.
- The licensee reports the total number of classrooms in operation under the license, indicating the type of each classroom (GSRP, Head Start, NAEYC accredited).
- Complete an SAS for the GSRP classroom.
- Print a copy of the classroom survey that includes the star rating for the classroom by clicking on the reports dropdown menu in the upper right hand corner of the licensee's SAS screen.

GSRPs that choose to show classroom-level evidence of the GSQ star rating will post as "Rating in Progress" on www.greatstartCONNECT.org until the entire site completes and submits the SAS.

How should I interpret the GSQ star-ratings?

- ★ 1 Empty Star – Program meets basic health and safety licensing requirements.

All other star ratings are blue:

- ★ 1 Star – Program meets licensing requirements and participates in Great Start to Quality.
- ★ 2 Star – Program demonstrates quality across some standards.
- ★ 3 Star – Program demonstrates quality across several standards.
- ★ 4 Star – Program demonstrates quality across almost all standards.
- ★ 5 Star – Program demonstrates highest quality.

Remember that for many sites, the GSQ star rating is self-assessed and that GSQ ratings are valid for two years. This is much different from the GSRP requirement for annual, comprehensive

program evaluation with a research-validated tool. The HighScope Educational Research Foundation offers this interpretation of PQA scores:

- 1 is low quality,
- 2 is low-medium quality,
- 3 is medium quality,
- 4 is medium-high quality and
- 5 is high quality.

How should GSRP and GSQ work together?

Though the state has not provided formal opportunities to bring GSRP and GSQ together about shared work, we are all working toward the 'big picture!' There are many advantages of intentional partnering at early childhood sites that house both GSRP and other early childhood programs. The GSRP continuous improvement model can be foundational to collaborative efforts; consider how activities can be prioritized to build momentum while systematically strengthening programs and determine where more in-depth evaluation is needed to either demonstrate effectiveness or to diagnose potential problems. Collective efforts can strengthen quality more quickly than one program may be able to accomplish singly.

Children and families benefit with aligned processes and consistent practices within a site, especially sites that include infant-toddler through preschool programming. Consider strategies for family engagement, adult-child interactions, conflict resolution, and structural pieces such as participation in Federal food programs.

Collaboration can capitalize on similar responsibilities within roles of the GSRP ECS and the GSQ Improvement Consultant, such as using data to guide program improvement and to monitor and support change elements. GSRP and GSQ data can be examined for alignment. Improvement plans can be designed in conjunction with partners or examined for overlapping features. Time and financial efficiencies are realized when site-level data is used to set program goals and design professional development activities. Together with the GSRP ECS, the GSQ Improvement Consultant may consult with staff, communicating results and agreeing on strategies to reach goals.

Partnership can help the ECS and GSRP teaching teams have a stronger connection to the regional RC. GSRP staff can use the RC to assist enrolled families to find quality wrap-around child care and access a lending library of learning materials. The RC is a link to professional development and training opportunities that match teaching staff, support staff and family interests. The ECS can learn about training supports for GSRP Associate Teachers working toward CDA, AA or BA in early childhood education or child development.

As the early childhood leader at the ISD, the GSRP Early Childhood Contact (ECC) is kept abreast of collaborative GSRP/GSQ efforts and represents GSRP at the Great Start Collaborative (GSC). Each GSC provides a format for local discussion and agreement on how all quality efforts fit together to support the local GSC strategic plan to accomplish better results for young children and families.